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Goleta Valley HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Goleta Historical Notes

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The Editorial Board members are:

J.M. Ruhge, Editor
N. Price
A. Ruhge
L. Smitheram
D. Vanderhoof

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Goleta Historical Notes

Volume 5, No. 1, Fall 1990

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This issue of *Goleta Historical Notes* is dedicated
to the descendants of Joseph and Lucy Sexton



The Sexton House as it appeared sometime in the 1890s. Joseph Sexton is standing at left; Lucy is partially hidden from view in the rose garden at right. Courtesy Goleta Valley Historical Society.

ENCORE FOR THE SEXTON HOUSE

Rebecca Conard

with contributions by Frances Franklin and Sydney Baumgartner

Back in the 1870s, when La Patera, now Goleta, was just a fledgling farm community located about nine miles of bad road from Santa Barbara, "Old Resident" or "Observer" would write an occasional letter to the editor of the Santa Barbara *Daily Press* to inform folks in town about how wonderful life was out there in the country. On August 30, 1873, "Observer" wrote:

This nursery of Sexton's promises to be a permanent affair, and has been a great convenience to the landholders of the vicinity. Nearly every flower, vegetable, or fruit that has been experimented upon by S. has done well. Mind, there were old coddles and growlers (word munchers) who tried to scare J.S. with: 'It will never pay you; there's hopper-grasses, and drouths, and floods, and dust, and birds, and ants, and wind, and you'll never get your money back.' But S. dug in and pitched in, and his labors now begin to bear profits.

Indeed, he got his money back, and more. By 1873, the Goleta Valley was beginning to prosper as an agricultural area. Joseph Sexton's Goleta nursery, established in 1869, was almost five years old that year. On the virgin valley soil,

trees and plants flourished, even under natural semi-arid climatic conditions. His five-year orange and lemon trees were said to be "quite as large as any of the same age seen in Los Angeles, where irrigation was used.¹

In 1869, Sexton made what was, at least in retrospect, a wise business decision, because his neighbors were serious about turning the Goleta Valley into a commercial farming district. By 1873, Ellwood Cooper was cultivating almonds, English walnuts, olives, and grapes on 2000 acres of the old Rancho Los Dos Pueblos.² Near Carneros Creek, Sherman P. Stow had just planted large walnut and almond orchards and had hired a full-time gardener to cultivate an assortment of vegetables.³ L. Allen Key was having great success with strawberries.⁴ T. Wallace More built a 700-foot wharf that year near the Goleta Slough and the asphaltum mine on his mesa property. To make market shipping easier for farmers in the area, he announced that he would also build a wide avenue from the stage road to the wharf.⁵ Joseph Sexton became one of More's chief wharf patrons, importing and shipping stock world-wide.

Joseph's success in the nursery business was not happenstance. His father, Richard, had established a nursery in Ione, California, and purchased another in Petaluma before coming to Santa Barbara in 1867, so Joseph had been more-or-less raised in the business. In a sense, horticulture was the only real skill he possessed. As children of a Gold Rush entrepreneur, the Sexton siblings spent their formative years in fairly isolated areas, which meant that they had few opportunities for formal education.⁶ Like his father, though, Joseph had a knack for plant propagation and a good head for business. During the late 1860s father

1 *Daily Press*, July 21, 1873.

2 *Daily Press*, September 23, 1873.

3 *Daily Press*, August 20, 1873.

4 *Daily Press*, June 20, 1873.

5 *Daily Press*, August 28, 1873.

6 Walker Tompkins and Horace A. Sexton, *Fourteen at the Table* (Goleta: Goleta Valley Historical Society, 1983), p. 7.

and son were looking for a promising opportunity. The Ione nursery had gone belly-up during the severe drought of 1863-1864, and the Petaluma business seems to have been considered a temporary enterprise while they surveyed the state for an ideal location. Early in 1867, Richard and his wife, Ann, moved to Santa Barbara and purchased land. Joseph joined them later in the year and helped his father start a new nursery, located in the vicinity of what is now the intersection of Castillo Street and Montecito Street in the West Beach area. Brother Walter stayed in Petaluma and ran that nursery for a few more years.⁷

The Sexton's move to Santa Barbara coincided with the break-up of La Goleta Rancho, one square league of choice land between the ocean and the foothills that had been granted to Yankee trader Daniel Hill in 1846 by the Mexican governor Pio Pico. When Hill died in 1865, the terms of his will directed that half of his estate go to his wife, Rafaela Ortega, and the other half be divided for the benefit of his thirteen surviving children. After the land was surveyed and officially subdivided in 1868, much of the old rancho went on the market.⁸ One of the many buyers was Joseph Sexton. Deeds recorded in May of 1868 show that he originally purchased a nineteen-acre parcel from R.J. Hill and another twelve-acre parcel from Lucretia Hill. Both parcels lay along Hollister Road. In June, he purchased from Josepha Hill de Taylor an additional 98.28 acres which lay adjacent to his first two purchases. The next year, he sold four acres from the east side of his property to his future parents-in-law, Isaac G. and Roxanna Foster.⁹

Thus was the Sexton Nursery born. In 1869, at age twenty-seven, Joseph Sexton entered business for himself. It was a busy year: he also built a house and took a bride. On November 18th, Thanksgiving Day, he and Lucy Ann Foster were married at her parents' new home near the corner of Patterson and Hollister Avenues

7 *Fourteen at the Table*, p. 11.

8 Tompkins, *Goleta the Good Land* (Goleta: Bicentennial edition, 1976), pp. 69-71.

9 Carroll Pursell, "Sexton House: A Victorian in Peril" in *Those Were the Days: Landmarks of Old Goleta* (Goleta: Institute for American Research, 1986), p. 70; Pursell's information, extracted from recorded deeds, differs considerably from the account of Sexton's land purchases detailed in Tompkins, *Fourteen at the Table*.

Avenues.¹⁰ After settling into their own newly finished home up the road, Joseph and Lucy started raising a family, which eventually numbered twelve children.¹¹

Sexton earned a reputation as one of the pioneer horticulturists who influenced the transformation of southern California's dusty villages and vast cattle ranchos into commercial farms and lush ornamental gardens. He was an experimenter, and the Sexton Nursery was as much a laboratory for developing stock suited to the southern California environment as it was a supply station. Historians have found it difficult to evaluate his contributions to horticulture because no catalogs from the Sexton Nursery or lists of plants he imported from abroad seem to have survived; at least, none has yet been discovered. Nevertheless, his nursery "was considered to be one of the most complete and extensive" in the entire country during the 1870s.¹² He imported stock from Asia, Australia, and southern Europe. In later years he made several trips to Hawaii in search of plant materials for his experiments with avocado trees.

Trees were one specialty, and Sexton is credited with popularizing the cherimoya.¹³ Perhaps a more important contribution was the Santa Barbara soft shell walnut. Tradition has it that he brought a sack of assorted Chilean walnuts from San Francisco in 1867. From this assortment, he developed a variety that was particularly well suited for commercial growing because the shell cracked more easily and therefore less nutmeat was lost due to crushing. Locally, the Santa Barbara soft shell became the preferred commercial tree, and until about 1910 it represented a leading crop of the Goleta Valley.¹⁴

10 *Fourteen at the Table*, pp. 17-18.

11 A genealogy of the Joseph and Lucy Sexton family appears on page 41.

12 Victoria Padilla, *Southern California Gardens: An Illustrated History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), p. 143.

13 Padilla, 143-144.

14 Owen H. O'Neill, *History of Santa Barbara County: Its People and Its Resources* (Santa Barbara, 1939), p. 372; *Fourteen at the Table*, pp. 68-69.

Flowers and ornamentals were another specialty. The Sexton Nursery is said to have stocked about 200 varieties of pinks, dianthus, and carnations, as well as hundreds of rose bushes. Roses seem to have been a personal favorite of both Joseph and Lucy, for they lined the property along Hollister Avenue all the way to Patterson with a hedge of red, white, and pink roses.¹⁵ From 1885 to 1895, Sexton also maintained an outlet at 708 State Street, known as the Santa Barbara Nursery and Floral Depot. Daughter Lottie Flora and son Howard presided over the downtown store, which carried a full line of shrubs, trees, annuals, perennials, and vegetable plants. Customers could also purchase cut flowers and have bouquets designed to order.¹⁶

The "arboretum" area of the Sexton garden between the house and Hollister Avenue was planted with unusual trees newly introduced to Santa Barbara by the Sexton Nursery and other local horticulturists. Many trees of the same age and species are to be found in the gardens of Sexton's old friends and associates, such as the Stows and the Franceschis. They shared the new introductions and experimented with their culture. These specimen trees were imported from all over the world: a cork oak from Portugal, a bunya-bunya and a sweetshade tree from Australia, a Guadalupe palm from Baja California, a Chinese fountain palm, a Chilean wine palm, and a jacaranda tree from Brazil. Sexton also developed new hybrids from these exotic trees, such as the famed Sexton flame tree, a cross between the Australian flame tree and the bottle tree. The surviving trees from the original nursery plantings are some of the oldest and largest of their species in California today.

In the March 1926 edition of *The Santa Barbara Gardener*, edited by Lockwood and Elizabeth de Forest, the Sexton garden was described as follows: "The grounds around the old Sexton place are a perfect museum of rare and beautiful old trees and shrubs. Mrs. Sexton is especially proud of her *Strelitzia* [giant bird of paradise], a magnificent specimen...." The specimen cork oak and Norfolk Island pine were considered "old and venerable" in 1926.

15

Padilla, p. 144; Gordon J. Van Laan, *A Penny a Tree: The History of the Nursery Industry in California from 1850-1976* (Sacramento, 1982), p. 22; personal interview with Evelyn Studebaker and Frances Franklin, Santa Barbara, January 19, 1989.

16

Padilla, p. 144; *Fourteen at the Table*, p. 78; Pursell, p. 74.



The first home of Joseph and Lucy Sexton, built 1869. This photograph would have been taken prior to 1883, when the house was moved across Hollister Avenue to the Kellogg Dairy. Courtesy Frances Franklin and Evelyn Studebaker.



Nursery workers tending the pampas drying fields, probably 1890s. Courtesy Frances Franklin and Evelyn Studebaker.



Joseph Sexton demonstrating the pampas grass packing technique. Courtesy Frances Franklin and Evelyn Studebaker.



One of two barns at the Sexton Nursery, this one still stands at the rear of the property. Standing L-R at rear: Wilbur McDonald, Ernest Sexton. Center grouping, L-R: Clay Beattie, Lucy Sexton, Barbara Sexton (standing behind Lucy), Mariette Sexton, Esther Moody Sexton (turned), Lynn Sexton, Anita McDonald (hand over face), Lucy Sexton Griffin. Front: Edna Sexton Beattie holding young Clay. Courtesy Goleta Valley Historical Society.

Over and above all his other accomplishments, Joseph Sexton made a name for his nursery by popularizing pampas plumes. He is said to have obtained the first seeds or specimens of Argentine pampas in 1872, and an advertisement in the *Daily Press* confirms that he was selling pampas plumes locally as early as 1873.¹⁷ Sexton is believed to have been the first person on the West Coast to raise the grass for commercial purposes. If he did not develop the drying method that made plumes so attractive as ornamental plants, he certainly perfected it: "by pulling the immature blooms from the sheaths and exposing them to the hot sun, the female plumes would fluff up and become light and airy."¹⁸

Production of pampas grass at the Sexton Nursery seems to have peaked between 1890 and 1895. By then, Sexton had 5000 hills of pampas, each hill yielding from 80 to 150 plumes annually. From 1874 on, he shipped plumes to New York, and from there to Europe.¹⁹ In order to meet the demand, son Charley invented a husker that made separating the immature plume from its sheath easier and faster. Chinese workers and local women performed most of the work. Harvest season began in September. First the plumes were husked, then hauled out to a drying field where they were laid out in long rows. Workers periodically turned and fluffed the plumes. Curing took about three days, after which the fluffy plumes were packed in wooden crates for shipping. Amazingly, about 3000 plumes could be compressed into one crate.²⁰

During the years that Joseph was busy building up his nursery business, he and Lucy were also producing a sizable family. Eight children were born to the couple between January 1871 and December 1879. The two-story house built in 1869 was filled to capacity, so the Sextons decided it was time to build a larger home. They commissioned Peter J. Barber, Santa Barbara's first professional architect, to design a house befitting their prosperity.

17 *Fourteen at the Table*, p. 74; *Daily Press*, October 10, 1873.

18 Padilla, p. 144.

19 Padilla, p. 144; *Fourteen at the Table*, pp. 74-77.

20 *Fourteen at the Table*, pp. 75-76.

Barber favored the Italianate style, and it was such a house he designed for the Sextons. They had little worry that Barber would produce a house suited to their needs and community status, for evidence of his work abounded in Santa Barbara at the time: the first Arlington Hotel, built in 1875; the second Santa Barbara County Courthouse, built in 1872; the Lincoln House (now the Upham Hotel), built in 1872. Barber also designed homes for Santa Barbara's prominent families. The Thomas and Delia Hope House (1875) and the Mortimer Cook House (1872) are known to have been designed by Barber; several other stately Victorian houses bear his distinctive Italianate touches and thus have been attributed to him.²¹ When the Sextons moved into their new house in 1880, they were in good company, architecturally speaking.

Photographs of the 1890s and early 1900s document the appearance of the house and grounds at that time, and these provided the basis for restoring the house in 1989-1990. The earliest known image of the house appeared in a full-page lithograph in the first published history of Santa Barbara County, published in 1883. Since these early "mugbooks," as they are affectionately known, were financed by subscribers who essentially purchased a berth in history, perhaps Joseph Sexton was letting the "old coddles and growlers" know that he had arrived.

The house became a showplace set in the midst of a working nursery. As of 1883, there were an unspecified number of greenhouses "fitted up with forcing beds [and] warmed by hot-air pipes."²² Adjacent to the house sat a windmill-driven pumphouse. The original walls were built vertically with a flared base, but at some unknown date the design was changed to the canted wall structure which now stands -- without its windmill. Roof drains on the house channeled rain water to a cistern constructed "of brick about twelve feet in diameter and as many feet deep."²³ The existing cistern, which is located off the back porch of the house, is built entirely of concrete and is approximately half the size of the original. It robabl

21 Herb Andre and Noel Young, *Santa Barbara Architecture, 2nd Edition* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1980), p. 282; Rebecca Conard and Christopher Nelson, *Santa Barbara: El Pueblo Viejo* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1986), passim.

22 Jesse Mason, *History of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, California*. (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1883), p. 274.

23 Mason, p. 274.

probably dates from the early twentieth century inasmuch as it is the only cistern that family members can remember. Water was delivered to the kitchen by means of a pipe and a hand pump located next to the cistern. The cistern also provided water for laundering clothes, which, for a family of fourteen, was probably the main activity around the back porch.²⁴

Photographs and family recollections provide additional detail about the grounds. There were a bunkhouse for Chinese workers, a tennis court, two privies, one of which sat within a grape arbor, a blacksmith's shop, a barn called "The Ark" where pampas plumes were packed and stored, and a pottery kiln. All the pots used at the nursery were produced on-site.²⁵ In addition to The Ark, a general purpose barn sat northeast of the house. This barn is the one still standing on the property. Lucy's buggy horse was kept here. The barn also contained stalls for an assortment of cows, pigs, and other horses, a hay loft, and a chicken coop.²⁶

Various landscape features were constructed during the 1890s and early 1900s. These included three concrete ornamental pools: a rectangular pool in front of the south porches, an oval pool east of the house, and an unusual polygonal-shaped pool built inside the main greenhouse. Several old photographs provide evidence that the rectangular pool was a favorite family gathering spot. The oval pool, constructed of rock and concrete, was removed in 1989; the pentagonal pool was relocated and now sits southwest of the house. These pools may have been added in an attempt "to spruce up the place for tourists," since the Arlington Hotel regularly brought guests out to tour the grounds.²⁷ Two other noteworthy features are still located on the grounds. One is a concrete retaining wall and step located off the southeast corner of the house. The second is a concrete and sandstone rock sundial platform inscribed "Sexton SB" on one side and "APRL 1908" on the other.

24 Franklin and Studebaker, January 19, 1989.

25 *Fourteen at the Table*, pp. 27-28, 63, 76-77.

26 Franklin and Studebaker, January 19, 1989.

27 Franklin and Studebaker, January 19, 1989.



The house photographed from Lucy's rose garden; probably late 1890s. Courtesy Goleta Valley Historical Society.



Joseph Sexton artfully reclining on the front step, late 1890s. Courtesy Goleta Valley Historical Society.

Inside view of one of the
Sexton Nursery greenhouses,
date unknown. Courtesy of
Frances Franklin and Evelyn
Studebaker.



The pottery kiln and workshop, date unknown. Courtesy Frances Franklin and Evelyn Studebaker.



Lucy Sexton standing in the grape arbor, late 1890s. Courtesy Frances Franklin and Evelyn Studebaker.



Boating on the rectangular pool, located south of the house. Lucy Sexton is seated right of center; the identities of the four children are unknown. This pool is now filled with bog-tolerant plants. Courtesy Goleta Valley Historical Society.



An 1890s view of the front parlor. Typical of Victorian interior design tastes, animal skins were draped over most of the parlor chairs and settees. Note the ornate gas lamp fixture on the wall and the bronze figurine holding aloft another gas lamp on the newel post. Courtesy Goleta Valley Historical Society.



The Victorian parlor version of a string trio: Edna on guitar, Rose on mandolin, and Lottie on violin. A drum on the left and an autoharp on the right suggest that on occasion the family band was larger. Courtesy Goleta Valley Historical Society.

The library as it appeared in the 1890s. A small closet was tucked behind the curtained center of the bookcase along the far wall -- the repository which once held Frances and Evelyn's skunk-scented walnuts. Courtesy Frances Franklin and Evelyn Studebaker.



Another view of the front parlor. The cast iron mantel and the wooden overmantel pictured here were restored and returned to the house in 1989-1990. Courtesy Frances Franklin and Evelyn Studebaker.





One of the Sexton boys beating rugs, an annual event. Courtesy Frances Franklin and Evelyn Studebaker.



Walter and Horace with Shillie. Courtesy of Frances Franklin and Evelyn Studebaker.

The Sextons busy lifestyle continued. In 1888 the last of their twelve children was born: Lucy Alice, named after her mother. Horace Sexton's memories of daily life are extensively described in *Fourteen at the Table*, which portrays a place bustling with activity. The day typically began with a hearty breakfast at six a.m. Children were assigned daily chores that were done before and after school. Each child was assigned a task suitable for his or her age and ability, such as milking cows, slopping pigs, chopping wood, cleaning the house, weeding the gardens, and fetching the mail. One task in which all the siblings participated was tending the gopher traps. Gopher control was absolutely essential to the ongoing success of the nursery, and Joseph further encouraged this enterprise by paying a bounty of five cents per tail. After the evening meal, served promptly at six p.m., Lucy would try to instill a love of literature in her children by reading the youth classics while Joseph perused the newspaper.²⁸

There was also plenty of time for play, to which a wealth of family photographs attest. As the children grew older, Joseph decided that their social life should have some structure, literally and figuratively, so in about 1890 he had a dance hall and theater built, located east of the house along Hollister Avenue. The hall soon became a community center, where plays and monthly dances were held. On election day, the Sexton Hall became a polling precinct, and it was regularly used for church socials, lodge meetings, and weddings. One of the saddest events to take place there was Charley Sexton's funeral, in March of 1898, after he was fatally injured by an explosion.²⁹

Joseph Sexton apparently was not content to rest with the success of his nursery. In 1894, he turned the Goleta operation over to his sons and purchased an 8000-acre cattle ranch in Ventura County. For several years he spent his weeks on the ranch and commuted by train to Goleta to spend weekends with his wife and family. For his next venture, he cofounded Saticoy Water Company in 1897 with fourteen other stockholders. Advancing age, however, persuaded him to give up active participation in these outside interests. Sometime early in the twentieth century he returned to Goleta and continued his plant propagation experiments.³⁰

28 *Fourteen at the Table*, pp. 31-43.

29 *Fourteen at the Table*, pp. 56-61; 87-88.

30 *Fourteen at the Table*, pp. 98-100.

On August 17, 1917, Joseph Sexton died at home. His funeral was one of the last community events to take place in the Sexton Hall. With the patriarch gone, family relations shifted. Lucy Sexton built a new home for herself on the Foster family property north of Hollister near Patterson (this house no longer exists). Mariette, who had kept house for her parents for several years, stayed in the family home. Rose Sexton Dearborn, recently widowed, also moved in with her two daughters, Frances and Evelyn.³¹ Harry Sexton and his wife, Mary, razed the hall and built their home on the foundations (still standing).³² The nursery business seems to have ended with Joseph Sexton's death. When Lucy died in 1927, Mariette inherited the house and surrounding grounds. By then, Rose had moved with her daughters to an adjoining property, located along the street now known as Dearborn Place.

Mariette, who never married, kept the house open to family and friends. Summertime usually brought an assortment of nieces and nephews to visit. Josephine Griffin Stitzlein, the youngest granddaughter of Lucy and Joseph Sexton, traveled from Salt Lake City to Goleta every other summer with her sisters.

We spent many a lovely summer at Aunt Rose's home and at the Sexton Home, which we called Auntie's (Aunt Mariette). At that time, I would walk barefooted from Aunt Rose's to Auntie's across the dirt path through the walnut orchards (where Ward Memorial Highway crosses Hollister Avenue).

I loved to walk around the grounds and feel the different barks on the trees, and to learn what they were used for in past years. It was the smell of the grounds that I loved more than anything. The greenhouse was also a wonderful place to go -- so peaceful and calm....

It was fun to walk down what seemed to me to be a LONG tree-lined drive to get the mail. Beautiful trees lined the drive. I enjoyed

31 Franklin and Studebaker, January 19, 1989; October 22, 1990.

32 *Fourteen at the Table*, p. 61, 101.

enjoyed picking oranges and getting water from the well -- all very exciting to a "city girl." The avocados were abundant, and we would pick them up off the ground and mash them with salt and pepper and add lemon juice, and spread the mixture on toast with bacon on top (my favorite meal). We fed the chickens and brought in the eggs. Auntie made the most marvelous cakes. She would make a huge angel food cake with the egg whites, and then a sponge cake with the egg yolks.

The old barn was fun to explore. There was an old Cadillac in the barn, and later Auntie bought a 1939 Hupmobile which she drove to Los Angeles once a month to do business. Oh, yes -- almost forgot to mention my most favorite place at the Sexton House. It was the wonderful bird nest collection that was up in the very top part of the house.³³

Under Mariette's ownership, the Sexton House was not only a more peaceful spot, its appearance also changed a bit. After the 1925 earthquake damaged the chimneys, Mariette closed the parlor fireplace and had a new mantel built around the library fireplace.³⁴ This new piece was of concrete sculpted to resemble logs, which added quite a different aesthetic to the Italianate house. No one knows why she chose this design. Perhaps she saw the mantel as a memorial to her father, or perhaps she was drawn to the Adirondack style of architecture which was then popular. Other changes included enclosing the south porches for use as sleeping rooms. The east porch was also enclosed and a new room addition built above it on the second level.

Mariette lived in the Sexton House until her own death in 1951. After that the family offered to sell the house and grounds to the County of Santa Barbara, but the County declined. As a result, the property went on the market and sold to Robert

33 Letter of December 5, 1989 from Josephine Griffin Stitzlein to the Goleta Valley Historical Society.

34 Franklin and Studebaker, January 19, 1989.



The wedding of Evalina Rose Sexton and Franklin John Dearborn, September 9, 1902. Members of the wedding party, L-R: unidentified bridesmaid, Mary Chamberlain, Bert Bassett, Frank, Rose, Callie Chambers. Family members seated front row, L-R: Edith Dearborn, Lucy Sexton, Edna Sexton Beattie, Mrs. Chambers, Esther Moody, Horace Sexton, Mariette Sexton; Walter Sexton and Ernest Sexton standing at far right. The distinguished gentleman with beard and moustache standing behind Edna Sexton Beattie is John More, not Joseph Sexton, who refused to attend his daughter's wedding because he did not approve her choice for a spouse. Courtesy Frances Franklin and Evelyn Studebaker.



Three generations of Lucys are pictured here, taken at Joseph's extravaganza family gathering in 1914: Front row children, L-R: Elwene Sexton (Harry's daughter, in carriage), Evelyn Dearborn, Lucy Griffin, Eugene and Charles Sexton (Harry's twins), Clay Beattie, Mariette Beattie (in chair), and Lynn Sexton. Second row, L-R: Frances Dearborn, Barbara Sexton, Rose Sexton Dearborn, Lucy, Joseph, Anita McDonald, Lottie Sexton McDonald, Horace Sexton, Ernest Sexton with daughter Esther. Back row, L-R: Lucy Sexton Griffin holding Arthur, Harry Sexton, Edna Sexton Beattie, Joseph Sexton, Walter Sexton with Effie Lou in arms, Mariette Sexton. Courtesy Josephine Griffin Stitzlein.



A rare view of the south side of the house showing the front porch after it was glass enclosed in about 1916. Courtesy Josephine Griffin Stitzlein.



Another unusual view of the west rear of the house, taken at the same time the south side of the house was photographed, sometime between 1916 and 1926, when Mariette fully enclosed both porches on the south side. Courtesy Josephine Griffin Stitzlein.

Robert H. and Margaret Seaton in 1954. The Seatons reportedly lived in a smaller house located near the barn and rented out the house to a succession of tenants. In 1977, they sold the property to Jonathan and Juliette Eymann. The Eymanns converted the barn into a chapel and lived in the house with other members of their Jubilee Temple congregation.³⁵

These changes took their toll. By 1984, when the Eymanns sold the property to Invest West Financial Corporation, the house was in disrepair and the grounds were overgrown with vegetation. As part of the development plan approved for the Quality Suites Hotel in 1987, the house and grounds were restored to their historic appearance. Among other things, this entailed removing the enclosed porches and their concrete slab foundations in order to build new porches replicating the originals. The foundation, which had weakened over the years, was strengthened with interior bracing. Windows were restored and shutters replaced. On the interior, several architectural pieces were either repaired or restored, including a balustrade of black walnut, a leaded glass oculus above the main stairway, library shelves and china cabinets, colored lights in the bay window of the library, the *faux marbre* mantel in the parlor, and its wooden overmantel.

The long history of the house and grounds had seen the loss of some of its original trees, and those species known to have been in the original garden were replaced. Replacements include the cow itch tree, Santa Barbara soft shell walnut, avocado, mimosa, drago tree, Brisbane box, and Lombardy and silver poplar, in addition to the special Beauty of Glazenwood rose and pampas grass. Old fashioned garden plants, which could be identified in early photographs of the grounds or from memories of visitors to the old Sexton property, were included in the landscaping around the house and the inn buildings. Seeds, bulbs, cuttings and divisions from original plantings were propagated and used in the gardens as seen today. Giant timber bamboo, rice paper plant, ginger, canna lilies, pinks, and camellias evoke the character of the garden once tended so lovingly by the Sexton family.

During the ground-breaking ceremony on June 21, 1989, Frances Dearborn Franklin, granddaughter of Joseph and Lucy Sexton, recounted memories of "Living in the Old Sexton House." Her remarks, reprinted in their entirety here, provide a fitting epilogue.

35

Pursell, p. 78.



Groundbreaking Ceremony for Quality Suites Hotel, June 21, 1989. L-R: Dale Marquis, representing Invest West Financial Corp.; John Grant, representing Beaver-Free Corp.; Frances Franklin; Ed Lenvik, representing Lenvik & Minor Architects; Evelyn Studebaker; Lee Ploszaj, representing Art-Craft Construction; and Bruce Wennerstrom, representing Santa Barbara Bank & Trust. Tom Doty, photographer .



Frances Franklin and Evelyn Studebaker, June 21, 1989. Photographer, Tom Doty.

Living in the Old Sexton House

My mother, sister and I lived in this house from October 1918 to January 1927. At that time the house belonged to Auntie Mariette Sexton, mother's sister. I still can see clearly the two-lane road leading up to the place, the dusty curving driveway, and the hedge of red and white small roses separating the place from the road in front. We were familiar with the house and grounds, for we had spent many summers as part of the crowd of relatives who came to visit Grandpa and camp at the beach, play in the creek, can fruit, or just enjoy a leisurely vacation. About the house when we were young still lingered reminders of the eager collectors who had left behind blown birds' eggs, old nests in the attic and in a glass cupboard in the hall at the foot of the front stairs, skulls, bones and Indian arrows, reminders of the diligence of uncles in rifling Mescalitan Island, which used to be an Indian burying ground. Now it's only a memory and part of the airport.

Mother took the bus every day to work; I took it to high school and my sister hiked to the Goleta grammar school on Patterson Avenue. Auntie kept the house and cooked and we helped as we could on weekends. We were very short of money, so much of our efforts went toward producing it. Early we learned to "make do with what we had." Mother made over cast off clothes of kindly relatives. She worked up a lucrative baby sitting business, pressing me into service when she had too many calls. She sold the produce of three chestnut trees on her adjoining property to Diehl's grocery and made enough to buy material for my first evening dress to wear to high school functions. But our best source of income was being allowed to glean uncle Joe's walnut trees after the pickers had finished. Auntie would take us up to his orchard on Patterson Avenue in the car with lunch and water, leave us early each Saturday and Sunday and pick us up in the evening with our harvest. The cleanest, best looking nuts we sold "as is," but the not-so-attractive were cracked on a log with a hammer, and we would gather in front of the fireplace each evening to pick out the meats. We made a deal with a kindly candy manufacturer to buy our flour sacks full of the meats for his business.

One winter disaster struck; we noticed a compelling odor of skunk emanating from the area of the closet in the sitting room where the sacks were stored. We were devastated; such a loss, and the skunks had to be eliminated. Auntie whipped up some eggs, added poison, and put them at the entrance to the crawl space under the house. Dutifully the skunks ate the eggs and died under the house. So then, how to get them out? In her employ as a handyman and gardener was a small Japanese man named Harry. She told him to crawl under the house and retrieve the bodies. This he did with no demur; my sister said that when he emerged he was absolutely green with nausea, but he had the skunks. We conferred with the candy man about what to do with several flour sacks of good meats except for a slight odor of skunk which lingered. He was quite casual about it; said he would send them to a Los Angeles candy manufacturer, and if he didn't know about the situation, it wouldn't matter. We were very relieved.

Memorable moments here were spent during the 1925 earthquake which we considered very important, but the event is ignored when large earthquakes are mentioned. We were catapulted from bed in the early morning of June 29, and as I ran downstairs from my back bedroom I could see the water in the tank splashing against the window of the tank house as it was buffeted. Indifferent to the sounds of crashing glass, bumping furniture, we raced outside to an open field where we found a congregation of neighbors garbed just as they had jumped from bed, everybody frightened and with stories to tell. No trees were around except some tall palms with coats of dry leaves which danced and rustled as the shocks continued. Sharp aftershocks visited us for three days, quite hard, then dwindled to a shake whenever we didn't expect it.

The house itself suffered little damage, but all the chimneys were in heaps. Fortunately, it was summer and the weather was benign. In the living room the bookcases had fallen on the tables and chairs, spilling all the books. Inch-thick plaster dropped off the walls in great hunks, heavy with sand, unlike modern plaster. The glass-faced china cabinet in the dining room had come to rest on the dining table, dumping mother's cut glass to destruction,

finally after being shipped all over the state lovingly swathed in straw.

We gingerly collected such utensils as we needed and set up camp under the massive magnolias, where we ate and slept for several weeks until the aftershocks abated. But that was the style; I took a bus down De la Vina Street and saw everyone cooking on the front lawn. The experience broke down a lot of barriers.

Auntie saw the destruction as a golden opportunity to get rid of the decent, fitting, imitation marble mantel that graced one of the two fireplaces and had some workman fabricate artificial logs of concrete, even to knotholes and tag ends of branches to surround the openings. They were an ugly disaster, but Auntie liked them.

Whenever Auntie cleaned the fountain in front of the house, we young children took the opportunity to go sailing. After green algae and slime had been eliminated, we could see the bottom and didn't have to fight the muck. Our crafts consisted of the galvanized washtubs from the back porch, which we could maneuver around with the aid of a stick of wood for a paddle. We shrieked with delight when we made headway and loudly protested the inevitable disaster.

Auntie was a wonderful cook, and she loved getting huge meals for crowds of people. On a Sunday out under the magnolia trees the grownups would shove the rickety tables together, and perhaps thirty people would sit down to tamale pie, green corn, and lima beans, ending with Auntie's source of fame--her chocolate angel food cake. No one could match her effort for cloudy lightness and superior texture. The egg whites she beat by hand with a whip on a large platter, then baked the cake in a wood stove oven whose temperature she tested by inserting her hand.

Most of the people gathered around the baked meats were relatives, as there were twelve children in the family and many lived nearby. Grandpa liked having his kin around, particularly in the summer. In 1914 he staged a reunion for all of his children and their offspring at that time. A professional photographer took

innumerable pictures and Grandpa beamed like the originator of a great dynasty.

We never lacked for amusement; with so many children around the usual rivalries, favoritisms, quarrels, and hilarity were present. Those were the days of the Flying A studio, early movie producers, with studios on Mission Street. Some of our family were bitten by the bug, and our handsome uncle Joe sometimes wrangled a part in a silent move. I remember we saw him as a doctor whose whole practice consisted of pulling a sheet over a victim's face. As a consequence, we were the proud possessors of passes to the movie houses, and each Saturday Auntie would take us to see the latest episode in a cliff hanger which always managed to lure us back the next Saturday.

Always on the Fourth of July we had plenty of firecrackers; the grownups bought them for us in Chinatown and seemed never to worry that we would burn ourselves or blow off a limb. They had always had firecrackers when they were young, so we should too.

One summer when my cousin Mariette and I were teenagers, we inaugurated a guided tour of the grounds and made ourselves familiar with all the strange flora they contained. As an active nurseryman Grandpa had imported exotic plants from all over the world, pampas grass from Argentina, the Norfolk Island pine from an island near Australia, and the red-bellied *Brachychiton* [pink flame tree] which produced invisible hairs in its seed pods and made bare feet a torment. Among the hotel population the place had quite a reputation as a botanic curiosity, and many tourists drove themselves out from town to see the place. Mariette and I acted as guides to show them the cinnamon tree whose bark was real cinnamon, the cork oak whose bark yielded real corks, and the paperbark tree whose thin bark peeled off like old blotters.

With Auntie's sudden death in 1951 an era came to an end. None of the family wanted the place, as they had their own concerns. The family offered it to the County as a park for a song, but the County rejected the proposition. So it was sold to an individual, and then began the deterioration you see at present. I deplore the

state of the house and grounds at the present time and salute the efforts of Dale Marquis and Jerry Beaver to rescue a once stately home. This Barber-designed house was a great improvement over the preceding structure which occupied the site. My mother told me that in 1883 it took 34 horses to pull the predecessor across the road to make way for this house. It has sheltered many people, and I hope will be in condition to shelter many more.

In 1978, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors designated the Sexton House as a County Historical Landmark. The house and grounds were restored in 1989-1990 by owners Invest West Financial Corporation and Beaver-Free Corporation with Lenvik and Minor Architects; Sydney Baumgartner, landscape architect; Rebecca Conard of PHR Associates, architectural historian; Ward Bayly, contractor; Archaeological Advisory Group, Newport Beach; and Deborah Lambeth of Lambeth Design Group, Denver, interior designer.



The Sexton House at its nadir. A.C. Cole, photographer, 1987.



The enclosed porches come off, the windows are opened, the replacement chimneys come down, January 1990. Courtesy Art-Craft Construction Co.



Nearing the end, November 1990. Rebecca Conard, photographer .

SEXTON HOUSE ARCHAEOLOGY

James Brock

While the Sexton House and grounds have obvious manifestations of historic activity, there was reason to believe that further information rested underfoot, as archaeological deposits. For instance, it was known that the Sextons had two privies, or outhouses.¹ Archaeology might be able to locate the remains of these structures and investigate them for artifacts and other information. Also, using information gathered from similar sites of the same period it was possible to predict that other subsurface deposits might be present. In particular, it was common practice for Anglo-Europeans to bury their household refuse in backyard trash pits -- organized trash collection is a distinctly twentieth-century phenomenon. While the Sextons and other contemporary families reused many of the containers they purchased and probably composted much of their garbage, they still had plenty to dispose of. It is this abundant refuse that provides the unwritten story about Sexton family life.

Archaeological research was conducted at the Sexton site before and during construction activities. There were five phases of research, beginning in 1986. Phase I consisted of background research, documentation of surface features (pools, foundations, etc.), and the production of a research design. In 1988 a combined test and data recovery excavation occurred (Phase II/III). Phase IV consisted of grading monitoring with subsequent salvage excavation in 1989. The final phase, analysis of the site and the more than 540 pounds of historical artifacts recovered from it, took place in 1990.

Curiously, no privy holes were located during the archaeological work. Also, no physical evidence of the 1869 house was found. It is possible, however, that remains associated with privies and the first house lie in areas undisturbed by construction. It is also possible that construction of Ward Memorial Boulevard obliterated such deposits.

Nonetheless, six intact domestic trash pits from the late nineteenth-century were located and investigated in the area immediately north of the 1880 house. These were "U-shaped" and "V-shaped" pits averaging three-to-four feet in diameter and four-to-five feet in depth. They exhibited a consistent pattern of filling whereby trash was deposited, dirt was piled over it, and the process was repeated until the pit was full. The refuse deposits tend to be in a gray, ashy soil, yet there is no evidence of actual burning in the pit. This ashy soil probably represents the remains of ashes from the wood-burning kitchen stove and the fireplaces. The presence of nails in the ash layers suggests that the Sextons burned scrap wood. Also, the presence of burnt bone fragments probably represents the practice of burning leftover bones in the stove prior to burying them as a sanitary practice intended to keep rodents, insects, and other scavengers away from the trash pits and the house in general.

In terms of material composing the refuse, glass and ceramic items are by far the most common, representing nearly two-thirds of the total 540 pounds. Artifacts in the Sexton Collection include French perfumes bottles, porcelains, and many examples of cut and pressed glass. An abundance of pressed-glass goblets, with stems broken, attests to the Sexton's relatively high social status. These delicate glasses apparently did not last long in a household with twelve children. While it is difficult to determine the origin of unmarked glassware, it is likely that some of the cut and pressed glass was imported. This was certainly true of the Sexton's ceramic ware, which consists mostly of French porcelain and English ironstone. An assemblage of bottles represents a wide range of American manufacturers and products, such as patent medicines, pills, condiments, wine, bitters, soda water, ink, bulk canning jars, beer, and whiskey. Two notable local businesses are represented in the bottle collection. There are a few specimens from Santa Barbara Olive Oil Company and a series of bottles from Gutierrez Druggists, founded in Santa Barbara in 1855.

Animal bone recovered from the site demonstrates that the Sextons consumed a fairly standard American diet of beef, mutton, and poultry. The bones indicate that on the daily table there would not have been an abundance of finer meat cuts.

The absence of pork is perhaps unusual considering that the Sextons employed Chinese cooks.² Pork tends to be the predominant meat represented at contemporary Chinese archaeological sites in the United States. Indeed, archaeology provides no evidence for Chinese occupation at the site, although the Sextons are known to have employed Chinese cooks and Chinese fieldhands during the pampas grass harvest.

The archaeology of the Sexton House also provides information about leisure activities. Since it is rare to find evidence of particular individuals and their activities, sherds of hand-painted porcelain plates signed and dated by Lucy Sexton are of particular interest. There is also good evidence that one or more family members engaged in photography as a hobby. A number of photographic chemical bottles from the 1890s embossed with "HOWLAND & CHADWICK/PHOTO SUPPLIES/211 SOUTH MAIN ST./LOS ANGELES, CAL." were recovered, along with photographic plates and associated pieces of celluloid. These recovered items correlate with abundant family photographs taken during the 1890s which have survived in family photo albums, although the identity of the amateur photographer remains obscure. Interestingly, one of these family snapshots photographs shows a display of Lucy Sexton's hand-painted porcelain.

Not surprisingly, the archaeology strongly attests to the presence of children on the site. Numerous nursing bottles were found, along with miniature glassware and ceramic vessels. Of course, no Victorian archaeological site would be complete without an assortment of marbles and broken porcelain doll parts.

Two prehistoric artifacts recovered from the site, a finely-shaped pestle and a bone whistle, probably represent Sexton "treasure hunting" activities, rather than a prehistoric use of the property.

Archaeological deposits dating after 1900 at the Sexton House are small and infrequent. It would appear that by this point the Sextons were having their refuse removed from the site. However, what the Sextons left behind from last century, in their backyard, provides a valuable glimpse into their daily lives.

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Fourteen at the Table, p. 28.



Two views of work in progress, July 1988. Photographs by Archaeological Advisory Group.



Cross-section of Unit No. 6, July 1988. Photograph by Archaeological Advisory Group.



An 1890s view of the Sexton dining room showing Lucy Sexton's hand-painted china displayed on the wall and in the china cabinet. Courtesy Frances Franklin and Evelyn Studebaker.

SUMMERS AT CAMP LUPINE

Justin M. Ruhge

The Goleta Slough was once a large estuary connected to the sea. The 1860s and 1870s saw the Goleta Valley around the slough subdivided from two Mexican land grants into farms of various sizes, numbering about fifty. One of the larger farms was owned by John More, who acquired title to 1400 acres in 1879, 400 of which included the Goleta Slough and the island in it called Mescalitan. The north border of his property was Hollister Road.

More's neighbors on the north side of the unpaved and dusty thoroughfare were Joseph and Lucy Sexton. Over the years, the Sextons and Mores became good neighbors, so much so that More, who forbid trespassing on his property, allowed the Sextons and any of their friends to use the beach and slough for a camp each summer. The Sextons took advantage of More's hospitality for a period of about seventeen summers, during which time the transient compound was known as Camp Lupine, so-named for the blue lupine which grew there in abundance. The Stevens, Manchester, and Ealand families were among those who joined the Sextons, hauling their tents and equipment down to the beach for four to six weeks every year. In some years, when the sandspit existed, the camp moved to the ocean side.

The slough was a large enough waterway to hold many kinds of fish, mud sharks, and stingrays. Spearfishing and water sports were favorite pastimes of the carefree residents of Camp Lupine. The size of the slough also made it an excellent place for boating and sailing off the rougher ocean, and the Sexton boys became experts at boat building. Square-ended flatbottom punts came first, good for children to play in and for fishing in the slough. Later came round-bottomed sailboats and canoes made of waterproof canvas stretched drumhead-tight over



"Spearing sharks" is written at the bottom of this photograph, from the album of Frances Franklin. Note the line of canvas "buildings" in the background on the sandspit.

JOSEPH AND LUCY SEXTON

Joseph Sexton	Lucy Foster
b. 3-14-1842; d. 8-17-1917	b. 4- -1853; d. 5-31-1927
m. 11-18-1869	

Charles Edgar	b. 1-14-1871	unmarried	d. 4-16-1898
Harry Eugene	b. 2-17-1872	m. Mary Chamberlain	d. 10-3-1950
		12-17-1907	
Lottie Flora	b. 2-25-1873	m. Wilbur McDonald	d. 11-18-1956
		4-28-1900	
Mariette Cummings	b. 5-25-1874	unmarried	d. 6-29-1951
Howard Winford	b. 11-6-1875	unmarried	d. 10-12-1902
Evalina Rose	b. 10-6-1876	m. Frank Dearborn	d. 11-25-1965
		9-9-1902	
Edna Lora	b. 4-10-1878	m. Clay H. Beattie	d. 6-1-1931
		12-25-1900	
Joseph Foster	b. 12-25-1879	m. Alma Stewart	d. 9-10-1954
		2-10-1909	
Ernest Cheney	b. 2-13-1881	m. Esther Moody	d. 4-6-1945
		6-22-1902	
Walter Ralph	b. 6-12-1883	m. Ethelyn Reppy	d. 12-7-1963
		6-9-1910	
Horace Arthur	b. 2-25-1885	m. Ella May Morton	d. 9-28-1971
		9-26-1914	
Lucy Alice	b. 9-11-1888	m. Arthur Griffin	d. 2-10-1966
		9-9-1907	

Source: Sexton Family genealogy compiled by Frances Dearborn Franklin.